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*Daniel P. Smith Esq*

OREGON.

THE COST, AND THE CONSEQUENCES.

"Sic vos non vobis."

BY

A DISCIPLE OF THE WASHINGTON SCHOOL.

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## OREGON,

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AN unjustifiable impression exists throughout Europe, in Great Britain especially, that the extraordinary desire displayed by the people of the United States for the extension of the national domain, is demonstrative of a cupidity for land, as selfish as insatiable.

It is undeniable, that a majority of our citizens, consisting in no small proportion of naturalized Europeans, appear to be desirous of every possible acquisition of territory; although, in proportion to number, there is more land accessible here to enterprising industry, than ever before was at the command of a civilized nation. Nevertheless, nothing is farther from the truth than the inference, that the people of this Union covet territory to an extent far beyond that which they can themselves profitably employ, in order to prevent the settlement of it by foreigners.

Let any European who questions this allegation, give attention to this glaring fact, that whatever territory may be acquired by his brethren on this side of the Atlantic, is no more for the benefit of them and their posterity, than for him and his posterity.

Never were the words of Virgil "*sic vos non vobis*" (thus you not for yourselves), as exemplified in the nest-building fowl, the honey-making bee, the wool-bearing sheep, or plough-drawing oxen, more completely carried out, than in the exertions, sufferings, and sacrifices, which the present inhabitants of the United States are disposed to make for territorial aggrandizement. The acquisitions thus sought, are held less for their own benefit than for that of settlers who may come from any part of the globe. But, in particular, let any native of the British Isles keep in mind, that although all men from all corners of the earth are invited to parti-

cipate freely in our territorial affluence, none can have facilities so great, as those who speak the language of the people among whom a new abode is sought, and whose education and habits are the least of a nature to keep up the idea that they are foreigners.

Evidently the present population of the United States proper can have no motive for acquiring more land; since, whatever may be nominally acquired, will be for the benefit of all the rest of Christendom, no less than for themselves. We should fight for possessions for the posterity of the English, Scotch, and Irish, of which the British armies consist; nay, even for the soldiers composing those armies, who, like many of the Hessians brought here during the Revolutionary war, might find a home in the country which they would cross the Atlantic to subdue, preferable to that afforded by their native soil.

The author neither joins with his countrymen in their avidity for land, nor in the philanthropy which would make our acquisitions as beneficial to our adversaries as ourselves. He cannot help considering it as extremely unreasonable that the American people should pour out their blood and treasure for territory to be held in trust for the benefit of mankind in general, themselves and the aborigines, the only rightful owners, excepted.

Having shown that the expansion of the domain of this confederacy is less for the benefit of the actual population which it comprises, than for that of their adversary, let us, in the next place, consider how far this territorial enlargement is consistent with the endurance of the present much approved form of the national government.

The ruling party is mainly indebted for its ascendancy to its professions of superior zeal for a republican representative government, acting as immediately as possible in obedience to instructions from constituents. Under these circumstances, does it not become them to consider how far the gigantic dimensions to which it is proposed to swell this republic, will comport with a competent representation of the voice of the people; when in the course of a century, or a century and an half, the population of the vast territory which it is now contemplated to bring under the national dominion, shall be augmented agreeably to the geometric ratio which it obeys agreeably to experience.

It has been ascertained, that the population in the United States doubles every twenty-three years. Nothing but a diminution of

the supply of the necessities of life can cause this rate of increase to decline; and of course, should there be no such diminution, it will not be long before the territory in question will become as replete with inhabitants as the more populous countries of the old world.

Supposing the population, within the boundaries contemplated, to reach twenty millions in the year 1850, and that the period requisite to its duplication will be twenty-five years, it would follow, that in the year 1875, the population will be forty millions; in 1900, eighty millions; in 1925, one hundred and sixty millions; in 1950, three hundred and twenty millions; in 1975, six hundred and forty millions; and in 2000, a little more than one hundred and fifty years hence, twelve hundred and eighty millions.

But even at the close of the present century, eighty millions, the number of inhabitants which will then exist, would be too large for adequate representation, since the ratio of the voters to the representatives must be five times as great as at present, in order to have a commensurate efficiency. If, at present, there can be only one to fifty thousand, there could then only be one to two hundred and fifty thousand voters. At the close of the second century, it would be at least sixty-four times as great as at present, or twelve hundred thousand. Is it conceivable that such a population can all be well represented, and controlled by one great congressional legislature? The difficulty, as respects the Executive or judiciary, would not be less.

It has been admitted, that the increase of population on which these inferences are founded, would require the means of subsistence to augment proportionally with the people. But should the supposition that food will become so scarce as to check the multiplication of souls, be deemed more reasonable, it should be considered whether there will not proportionally be a greater impediment to the competency of republican government, arising from the greater temptation to crime consequent upon greater need; and whether the number capable of paying for the advantages of education becoming comparatively less, there will not be a larger number incapable of judging for themselves, and liable to be deceived by demagogues.

To allege that it is not our duty to consider the consequences of our measures to those who may succeed us, is to concede the impolicy of any effort to get more land than is now necessary to our welfare, in order that it may be enjoyed by posterity.

It has been said, that nobody looks to the consequences of their

measures so long ahead. But how ignoble would the policy of any statesman appear in the historical page, who should prefer a nominal territorial aggrandizement, to the endurance of the nation and the democratic institutions confided to their management: of whom the ambition as respects space, should be boundless, and yet so narrow as respects futurity? Within a term less than that which has elapsed since the Pilgrims stepped upon the Plymouth rock, or Penn made his treaty at Kensington, shall the sovereign members of our present confederacy, including, of course, the "old thirteen," play a subordinate part in a great, unwieldy multitude of several hundred millions of souls?

It will be perceived, that in the dispute respecting Oregon, each government has taken a course in opposition to the true interest of the people over which it presides. On the one hand, the American government is endeavouring to promote the transfer of labour, of which the United States are deficient, to a region more remote than Europe, and at great sacrifices to open an asylum for an excess of British population, which can neither be well fed nor well managed at home. On the other hand, the government of Great Britain rejects the proffered service, preferring to extend her North American colonial possessions, already a source of burdensome expense.

Meanwhile, neither party seems sufficiently aware, that this enormous republic, like a huge serpent gorged by taking in more than is consistent with vigour, may become less formidable to other nations, instead of deranging the balance of power, as some European writers have suggested, by a dangerous preponderancy. By our statesmen it appears to be overlooked, that like all other articles, the comparative value of land in the market must lessen in proportion as the supply is more abundant. The clamour in favour of the tariff, shows that this law is fully appreciated as respects manufactures and produce, yet, most unaccountably, it is not perceived to be equally in force as respects land.

The comparative lowness of wages, and the rate of interest on loans in Great Britain, arises from the greater scarcity of land in proportion to capital and labour. An opposite state of things exists on this side of the Atlantic. Here there is a superabundance of land, while labour and capital are comparatively scarce: hence the extreme cheapness of our wild lands, which are constantly drawing off from those which are cultivated, the labour and capital which are indispensable to their productiveness. It is, therefore, in direct opposition to the interest of those who own cultivated

farms and plantations, or arable land, in their vicinity, that we should make further additions to the unsettled territory of this republic.

National strength, financial economy, education, and religious instruction, are proportionally more attainable in a dense population, than in one which is scattered and straggling.

Admitting, however, that to our commerce, on the Pacific Ocean, the possession of some ports in Oregon may be desirable; admitting that the enormous region on this side of the Rocky Mountains, will not furnish a sufficiency of land to permit the growth of our American population, to an extent too numerous and unwieldy for the endurance of the Union, or the existence of free government; admitting that it were desirable that our domain, bounded on the east by the Atlantic, shall on the west be extended to the disputed shores of the Pacific, are there not many things which nations, no less than individuals, must forego, when the attainment will "*cost more than it will come to?*" Our last war with Great Britain cost at the rate at least of forty millions of dollars a year, besides losses, public and private, to an enormous amount. Yet there is much reason to infer that the annual expense of another war with that power, would be far greater. We came out of the war of 1812, exulting that we had sustained no territorial losses. Our gains were all negative, with the exception of the glory of some military and naval success. Yet our victories were accomplished under circumstances which cannot again exist. When the war commenced, the navy and the armies of Great Britain were fully occupied in fighting for independence against Napoleon, aided by a great part of Europe, more or less subjected to his despotism. Subsequently to his fall, before she could direct her whole force towards the United States, the other powers, who had become allied with her in dethroning that despot, insisted upon a general peace.

Were it a question, whether or not to abandon an indubitable right, such as that which a Creek or Cherokee had to the soil on which his race had existed from time immemorial, a brave and virtuous native American would rather die than, in obedience to the dictation of an invader, meanly live to carry his bones to be deposited, a few years later, on some spot in a distant region. But the actual object of contention is the inverse of rightful. The question is, which of the parties is best entitled to carry out, in Oregon, a system by which the aborigines of North America have



for the most part been extirpated, in derogation of strict justice and humanity.

Consistently with the allegation, "he that knoweth his Master's will, yet doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes," while those who neglect that will, *ignorantly*, are to be beaten comparatively with few, would not the Pagan savage have a better prospect in a future state, than Christians who go to war, not to defend property which God has given them, but for a precedence in taking that which he has given to others, as their only home in this world?

It has been justly observed, that in consequence of the extreme remoteness of the disputed territory, the conquest and defence of it by an army would be immensely expensive, and without naval superiority could not be successful. If this great republic is to indulge in such vast projects of aggrandizement, should it not begin by building a navy competent to cope with that of Great Britain? Unless this be done, will not the threats of our political leaders be viewed by all the world as an effort to deter Great Britain from insisting on claims which we have not the means to resist? Evidently we have no hold upon that power, beyond her unwillingness to bear her share in a war productive of impoverishment and misery to both countries, and which would cause an additional and extremely distressing burthen upon her finances. But if the plunge be made, however unwillingly, we are certain to incur losses and expenses at least equal to those of our last war, and probably extending to treble their amount. Thus, while several members of the confederacy plead inability to raise by taxation enough money to pay the interest due upon their debt, we are, for the sake of a territory some thousands of miles distant, and separated from us by barren and mountainous deserts, to expend a sum far greater than that of the public debt due by all the States. This expenditure is to ensue without our having the smallest reason to think that we shall, in consequence of it, be any nearer to the acquisition of Oregon, than if it had not been incurred.

Let it be supposed, nevertheless, that we shall succeed in getting possession of the much coveted territory, what benefit will the people on this side of the Rocky Mountains gain by their association with the people on the other side? So long as the inhabitants of Oregon shall be too poor and too weak to govern and protect themselves, we shall have the honour of being at the expense and inconvenience of protecting them; but whenever they shall become sufficiently powerful and wealthy to form an inde-

pendent nation, can it be expected that their representatives will cross barren mountains and deserts, thousands of miles, in order to have their laws made with the aid of strangers?

The grandeur of a monarch may become greater in proportion as his dominions are extended. The more sheep he may have to shear, the more abundant will be his crop of wool. But in a truly democratic confederacy, each of the confederated States must, to a certain extent, be self-governed; while, to the national revenue, the contribution from some members may be much less than that which may be expended for their benefit. It is notorious, that on some counties in the State of Pennsylvania, more money has been bestowed from the School Fund, than the whole sum raised within them by State taxation. Thus there is a resemblance between reciprocal consequences of annexation or acquisition of territory by a republican confederacy, and the taking in a new member in the case of a copartnership, which must be rendered stronger or weaker accordingly as the member introduced has more or less capital, or more or less ability than those previously composing the firm. If a partner be taken into a concern who is in debt, in a state of hostility with his neighbour, and wanting in capacity to take care of his own affairs, evidently it must be disadvantageous to his new associates.

As soon as the immense regions between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi shall be well peopled, if judiciously governed, it will not be within the power of Great Britain to prevent them from confederating with the people of Oregon.

How is our government to obtain the enormous funds requisite to carry on a war? They will have credit neither at home nor abroad. While the United States have within them powerful and uncompromising factions, which hold up to the world the prospect of disunion and consequent anarchy, can it be expected that our government will have credit to carry on a war *extremely* unpopular with the great mass of our more wealthy and intelligent citizens?

It should be remembered that monied men, for the most part, think very unfavourably of belligerent measures for the acquisition of Oregon, and would not deem it prudent to invest money in any government stock issued for the purpose of asserting a claim to a worse than useless territory on the coast of the Pacific. Would it not, in truth, be preferable to lend money to a gambler to engage in the game of hazard, upon the condition of repayment only if the borrower were to win? Would not a war for Oregon

be a game where immense sacrifices would be inevitable, while success would afford no means of indemnification?

The people of *these States* are too little used to direct taxation, to justify much reliance on that resource. Those who are sufficiently old, may remember the fruitlessness of the attempts to get any adequate resources in that way, towards the close of the last war. During peace, and while agriculture, manufactures and commerce, were all prosperous, Pennsylvania, one of the most wealthy of the confederated States, has been unable to raise, by *direct taxation*, the means necessary to prevent a delay in the performance of her pecuniary obligations, which has reduced many to indigence who relied upon her faith. Under these circumstances, will her citizens, in preference to their just debts, consent to pay taxes in order to obtain lands in Oregon, tending to withdraw from the older States the labour of which they are in want, and to relieve Great Britain of that which it is beneficial to her to relinquish?

Among the most serious objections to a war for Oregon, are the horrible consequences to which it would subject the scattered population now residing in that region. It would be impossible for the settlers to remain neutral, and should they take part with the United States, they would become victims of the barbarous and murderous predatory banditti, composed of the savages and half savage whites, or half-breeds, which is more or less under the influence of the Hudson's Bay Company. When such men take up the hatchet or scalping-knife, experience has shown, that in the use of these weapons, their own customs are much more influential than the creed of their more civilized employers. Against such Scythian forays, how will the settlers unite so as to make head? Is it not evident that a greater blow to the prosperity of Oregon could not be devised than a war with Great Britain?

Mr. Monroe's edict forbidding Europeans to establish colonies on this continent, can have no weight while unsupported either by military or naval power adequate to its enforcement, and unsanctioned by the parties which it affects.

So far as North America has been colonized by fraud or by superior force, the wrong done to the aborigines by the colonization of the portion which we inhabit, is greater than any which can be done to us, the possessors under that wrong; even were the territory which we actually occupy the object of a new colonization, such as those made by the Danes, Saxons, and Normans in Great Britain. Our own course of conduct, as respects the rightful owners of the American soil, furnishes an apology for invasion by

any nation which, having sufficient incentives, may have also the requisite military strength. I trust that there is no nation sufficiently powerful to make a Norman-like conquest on the territory of the United States proper; but if Great Britain or France had a sufficient motive for the effort, evidently it would not be in the power of the United States to prevent either from colonizing the territory between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific. For the defence of that region a naval superiority would be necessary, for which our people neither can nor will furnish the means. During peace, the disposition to support a large navy would be wanting; during war, the ability would not exist, even if the disposition were to be excited.

If, in consequence of a preference for the republican form of government, the population of the United States is prone to confine itself to their acknowledged domain, it is better for us that a large portion of the Continent should so remain, as not to enter into a competition with us for settlers; and it were preferable to have on our frontiers, a population kept in check by a strong government having a great interest in being at peace with us.

Were the whole Continent to come under our republican flag, it would soon, as above shown, have a population too vast to be ruled as one great republic; and were the enormous territory in question, to be apportioned between different republican nations, the liability to strife would be greater than if the portions not under the sway of the United States were ruled by the British.

Is it not vastly more important that the Union should be preserved, the national constitution respected, and the free municipal institutions derived from the wise and virtuous Britons who colonized our country, retained in their full force, than that the national domain shall be extended?

It is to those institutions, to the "*Liberté Communale*," on which De Tocqueville has laid so much stress, as being the safeguard of our national freedom, that we are indebted for our superiority over the colonists of other countries. Will not a portion of the reverential gratitude with which every enlightened American regards those British sages, to whose virtue and wisdom we owe our national existence, be extended to the soil which gave them birth and education? And will not the interest with which the modern Briton beholds results springing from the excellence of British institutions, and the peculiar aptitude of his race for self-government, be associated with the country which has afforded a magnificent field for the development of such results?

Let every Briton, moreover, keep in mind the fact insisted upon in commencing these suggestions, that whatever territory may be acquired by his Anglo-Saxon brethren, on this Continent, is no more for the benefit of them and their posterity, than for him and his. A Briton can reach Oregon in as little time, nearly, as a citizen of the United States, and on arriving, would have every essential advantage which the latter could claim.

To conclude, should any two men who were transacting business with each other to an enormous amount, differ in opinion respecting their respective titles to a tract of wild land, of vastly less importance to the wealth and happiness of either, than the preservation of their amicable relations, would it not be wise in them to leave the question to arbitrators, with a determination to abide their award whatever that award might be? Where peace is far more important than the object in dispute, is not this the only honourable way of settling the question without a collision, immensely more injurious than the worst possible award? Even if some injustice should accrue, no dishonour could arise from such a course of procedure.

\* It was for this liberty of the communes, under another name, that the states rights party contended until they surrendered to king caucus.

## PROPOSED PETITION.

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*To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled, the Petition of the undersigned, Citizens of the United States, dwelling Eastward of the Alleghanies, and others, with whom the welfare of their country is the primary object,*

### MOST RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS:—

That under the present naturalization laws, the wild lands within the national domain are quite as open to foreigners as to native citizens; so that, were the proposed war for Oregon to take place, native American blood and treasure would be lavished in fighting with foreigners, who, on the successful termination of the struggle, would, as settlers in that country, enjoy every advantage which would be attainable by those at whose cost it might be won.

In fact your petitioners conceive, that, under existing circumstances, the acquisition of territory by the actual citizens of the United States, endows them merely with a trust estate for the benefit of the whole human race, no less than for themselves, and especially for the benefit of those natives of the British Islands with whom the war is to be waged.

Any farther extension of this costly and embarrassing trust estate, is deprecated by your petitioners the more, because it has not awakened the least gratitude in the nations for whose benefit it has been exercised. On the contrary, your petitioners are censured throughout Europe, under an erroneous idea that they are actuated by a cupidity as selfish as it appears to be grasping. Yet it must be quite evident that, personally, they cannot have the smallest interest in any further territorial aggrandizement; in the first place, because they have more wild land accessible to their enterprise and industry, than can be cultivated by themselves or their posterity for a century to come: and, secondly, be-

cause the extension of the field for settlers, tends to withdraw, from the older States, labourers whose removal must lessen the productiveness of lands, houses, manufactories, workshops, and shipping, while it tends to serve Great Britain by relieving her of an excess of discontented operatives, which can neither be fed nor well managed at home.

Your petitioners are aware, that it has been alleged that among the motives for war, is the expected enhancement of the western pork and corn requisite for the subsistence of armies marching towards Oregon, mainly at the expense of the population residing to the eastward of the Alleghanies. Your petitioners would grieve that any of their fellow-citizens residing to the westward of those mountains, should be so heartless and sordid, as to prefer an improvement in the price of their produce to the welfare of their country.

Were a father to commence a suit for a landed estate, to be held in trust for the benefit of the children of the defendant no less than for his own, could these be expected to lend either their time or their money in promoting the success of legal measures, as impolitic as litigious?

Your petitioners humbly conceive that it were equally unreasonable in the national government, to expect them to afford any voluntary aid to a belligerent policy, through which they are to incur the greatest sacrifices of wealth, health, comfort, nay, even of life; while, like an unnatural parent, that government makes no available distinction between their claims upon acquired territory, and those of any foreigners with whom they may contend.

Hence, with all due deference, your petitioners pray that, before any sacrifices of blood and treasure are made for the extension of the national domain, it may be well considered how far it may be practicable to make such changes as shall enable Americans to feel, that they are not to devote themselves for the service of a country which will make no available difference between the citizen who may suffer in its defence, and the alien who may land upon its shores for the purpose of conquest, plunder, or devastation.

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